

# A Study of *Ch'eng*

—The Cosmo-ethical Principle in the  
Confucian Metaphysics of Morality—

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## I. Introduction

The efforts of some of the modern Confucian scholars seem to turn toward re-establishing Confucian order and harmony with creative enthusiasm. They declare that the contribution of Confucianism to the eternal hope of mankind toward realizing the true sense of culture and peace is not to be simply discarded, because the true spirit of Confucianism is nothing but a craving for order and harmony.

What, then, is the motive to achieve the ideal of Confucianists in their craving for harmony? The answer given from the time of its initiator Confucius himself down to the present is invariably one: *ch'eng*<sup>a</sup> (sincerity, truth, or absolute reality). The other key-concepts like *hsing*<sup>b</sup> (nature), *jen*<sup>c</sup> (humanity or benevolence), *li*<sup>d</sup> (principle or rationality) and *ch'i*<sup>e</sup> (principle of dynamic creativity or material force), etc. have been cast to incessant transformation and faced ups and downs according to the time and situations. The intricate relations and proper places of those key-concepts will be examined later on within the general framework of the Neo-Confucian metaphysics of morality centering around the concept of *ch'eng*.

The purpose of this paper is, first, to trace the origin and develop-

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ment of the concept *ch'eng* in the history of Chinese philosophy, and, second, to reconstruct the genuine philosophy of commitment in compliance with the true spirit of Confucianism which is now generally perceived by the contemporary Confucianists. A few qualifying remarks are necessary to clarify and delimit the scope of this paper. Because a detailed study of the historical formation and development of the concept of *ch'eng* would require another paper of considerable length, the first part of the historical research on *ch'eng* will be sketched only with some emphasis on the periods of classical Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism, especially those Five Masters chosen by Chu Hsi (1130~1200).

The place of the concept *ch'eng* through the course of Chinese philosophy is comparatively stable and constant since *the Doctrine of Mean* was formed around the early Han dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220).<sup>1)</sup> The philosophical explanation of *ch'eng* in *the Chungyung*<sup>2</sup> is so perfect and complete in itself that the later commentaries are sometimes short of proper interpretation or sometimes considered to be a mere elaboration only adding new terminologies.

It should be noted, however, that this concept of *ch'eng* is not so much a pure-absolute-transcendental principle which has nothing to do with mundane affairs of a positive human being, as a positive-creative-power. *Ch'eng* is the supreme reality which sustains and produces the myriad things under Heaven (i.e. ontocosmological principle). *Ch'eng* also preserves and maintains the very essential characteristic of the reason why a man is a man and the ideal of what a man ought to be

1) For the textual critique about the date of *the Chung-yung*, see Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*; Princeton University Press (1963). Hereafter shortened as *Source book*. p.97 note 6; 徐復觀, 中庸的再考察, 東海學報 4卷 1期(1962, 6月), 233-256; 高明, 中庸辯, 聯合書院學報 2 期(1963, 6月) 55p.

(i.e. ethico-practical principle). The philosophy of commitment might best describe, though not define, the true spirit of Confucianism, if we wish to do justice to it. If we elevate and enlarge the sense of 'moral' to its utmost implication, the following remark would be well taken as a precaution for the proper understanding of the Confucian spirit.

The impact of moral character can be more easily felt than defined, experienced existentially better than packed in words. <sup>2)</sup>

In its traditional formulation, the philosophy of commitment is an affirmation of the principal conviction that a certain inherent ability to attain the virtue of Heaven is 'wired' or 'designed' into the very structure of man (*t'ien-jen ho-yi*). <sup>g</sup> The philosophical function of *ch'eng* is, then, to ascertain the possibility of man and Heaven on the one hand and to provide a metaphysical foundation of such a possibility with the theoretical framework on the other. The former function of *Ch'eng* is called the way of man (*jen tao* <sup>h</sup>) and the latter is called the way of Heaven (*t'ien tao* <sup>i</sup>). This is the reason why I coin the word 'cosmo-ethical principle' in order to point out the dual quality of the concept of *ch'eng*.

## II. *Ch'eng* in the historical context of Chinese Philosophy

### 1. Confucius

Confucius is notably reticent with regard to any metaphysical expla-

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<sup>2)</sup> Morton, W. Scott. "The Confucian Concept of Man: the original Formulation," *Philosophy East & West*. 21, 1 (Jan., 1971), p.71.

nation as is the same case with Buddha Sakyamuni.<sup>3)</sup> It is not strange, therefore, that an explicit expression of the concept *Ch'eng* is not to be found in his recorded sayings.<sup>4)</sup> In fact, the nominal substantive use of the character *ch'eng* denoting the metaphysical concept of reality or truth is not to be found until the time of *the Chung Yung*. Before the introduction of its metaphysical usage, *ch'eng* simply functions as an adverbial predicative meaning 'really' or 'truly'.<sup>5)</sup>

Although the term is not explicitly used before *the Chung Yung*, a similar idea to *ch'eng* is implicit in the form of other concepts like the hexagrams of *chung fu*<sup>j</sup> or *wu mang*<sup>k</sup> in *the Book of Changes*: *ssu wu ssu*<sup>l</sup> (no depraved thought) summed up as the crux of *the Book of Poetry* by Confucius; even in *the Analects*, though in different terms, the idea of sincerity is expressed as the way of one thread comprehended by Tsung Tzu (*yi kuan chih tao*<sup>m</sup>) with twofold meaning of self-truthfulness and altruism (*ch'ung shu*<sup>n</sup>) or concentration on both internal subjectivity and its proper external expression in coordinate mutual belief (*chu ch'ung hsin*<sup>o</sup>)

## 2. Tzu Ssu

Tzu Ssu, the alleged author of *the Doctrine of Mean*, can be said to

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- 3) The awareness of the supreme reality is, however, frequently experienced and expressed by Confucius. Symbolically at the age of fifty he was completely aware of his heavenly mission (知天命). See also, Hattori, U. "Confucius Conviction of His Heavenly Mission," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 1 (1936). 96-108. For a more favorable assessment of his reticency on the metaphysical problems, see Morton, *op. cit.*, p. 77.
  - 4) The character *ch'eng* is found twice in *the Analects*. cf. 12:10, 3 & 13: 11. Both cases are used in an adverbial sense. The same usage is found even in the *Tao Te Ching*. Cf. ch. 22.
  - 5) Pulleyblank, E.G. "Studies in early Chinese Grammar. Pt. I," *Asia Major*. 7. (1959). 36-67. p. 37. *shih* 實 used adverbially, like *ch'eng*, 誠 to emphasize the reality of an assertion.

complete the theory of *ch'eng*. The internal evidence of textual critique seems to show its two separate divisions. The first section solemnly declares the unchanging *principium* of Confucian philosophy in three sentences:

What Heaven imparts to man is called human nature. To follow our nature is called the Way. Cultivating the Way is called education. <sup>6)</sup> (ch. 1)

From the latter half of Chapter 20, which according to Prof. Hsü would mark the second division of *the Chung Yung* written by real Tzu Ssu in order to praise the glorious virtue of his ancestor Confucius, the superficial bifurcation between *t'ien ming* <sup>p</sup> and *hsing, chung yung* and *chiao* <sup>q</sup> is dynamically identified through the motivating force of *ch'eng*:

Sincerity is the Way of Heaven. To think how to be sincere is the way of man. (ch. 20)

The philosophical argument for this whole theory of sincerity is expressed in a terse formulation as follows:

It is due to our nature that enlightenment results from sincerity. It is due to education that sincerity results from enlightenment. Given sincerity, there will be enlightenment, and given enlightenment, there will be sincerity. (ch. 21)

The metaphysical elaboration has to wait for the intellectual vigor and ingenuity of the Sung-Ming Neo-Confucianists, but nobody is ever doubtful of this fundamental conviction that the final result of the most sincere would be a unity with Heaven and Earth. "The ultimate

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6) Translations from the original Chinese are all from the *Sourcebook*, unless otherwise indicated.

goal is a reasserted unity of oneself with the total reality in a conscious creative activity of perfection.”<sup>7)</sup>

That idea is lucidly expressed in the *Chung-yung*, which supplies Confucianists with an insight through the whole stage of development.

Only those who are absolutely sincere can fully develop their nature. If they can fully develop their nature, they can then fully develop the nature of others. If they can fully develop the nature of others, they can then fully develop the nature of things. If they can fully develop the nature of things, they can then assist in the transforming and nourishing process of Heaven and Earth, they can thus form a trinity with Heaven and Earth.<sup>8)</sup>

But for those who are common and ordinary, the way to be sincere is always open. That is the fundamental tenet underlying the spirit of *the Chung Yung*, which literally means the way for those who are ordinary. “The Way is not far from man”:<sup>9)</sup>

*There is a way to be sincere with oneself: If one does not understand what is good, he will not be sincere with himself.*<sup>10)</sup>

Immediately follows the famous dictum of the Way of Heaven, i.e. sincerity itself and the way of man, i.e. to make efforts to be sincere. Then starts the detailed teachings, the concrete pragmatic method of finding one's way, which, according to *the Great Learning*, is the *basis fundamentalis* of the Confucian studying or learning. The close inter-relatedness of *the Chung Yung* and *the Ta Hsueh* is here clearly to

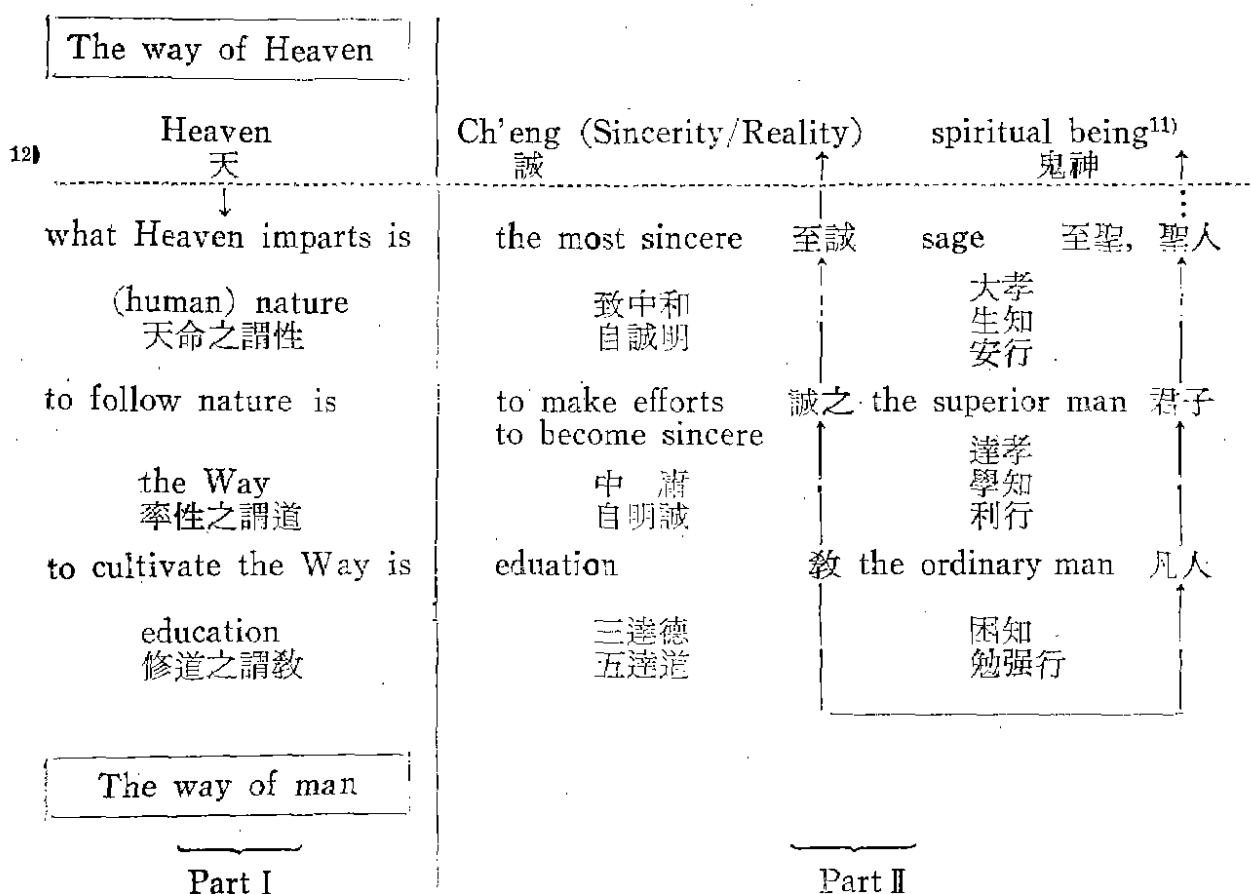
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7) Cheng Chung-ying, “Theory and Practice in Confucianism,” p.18. A paper handed out to the class of Neo-Confucianism in 1971, spring semester. U.H.

8) *The Chung Yung*, ch. 22.

9) *Ibid.*, ch. 13.

10) A verbatim quotation is also found in *Mencius*, 4A:12.

(Diagram 1) Diagram of the unitary relationship of Heaven and man based on *the Doctrine of the Mean*

be seen. But the scope of the effect of sincerity can differ from one another, which I will explain later when I venture a reconstruction of the philosophy of sincerity.

For the sake of comprehending the whole system of sincerity as the initial metaphysics of morality, I draw a diagram to show the unitary relationship between Heaven and man. What has to be further

11) This is not primitive animism or spiritism, nor is it similar to the supreme God as in the Christianity (esp. Judaism). The Ch. 16 of the *Chung Yung* indicates a blending of the two concepts of *k'uei-shen*; one as the religious object of worshipping, the other as the metaphysical principle behind the manifold phenomena.

12) The divided line is intended to point out the relatively insignificant separation of the way of Heaven from that of man: because the close relationship *ch'eng* and *ch'eng-chih* enables man to attain the union of man and Heaven.

elaborated by the Neo-Confucian philosophers is Part I, which may be called either the constitutional principle or the ontological framework. Part II, the practical or normative principle is so complete that the only thing needed for the later thinkers is a slight modification of terms in order to make it more suitable to the mental framework of a society removed somewhat more or less ten centuries from the original. But it is hardly deniable that the concept of sincerity is further refined and sometimes strained through its metaphysical elaboration during the subsequent stages of development and adaptation to the needs of the time.

### 3. Mencius and Hsün Tzu

Now, let us resume the historical study of sincerity after the period of *the Chung Yung*. Both *the Meng Tzu* and *the Hsün Tzu* abound in similar expressions to the concept of sincerity and the theory about self-cultivation or cultivation of mind as its basis. Though Mencius and Hsün Tzu differ in their respective perception of human nature, *hsing*, the difference is not so much dependent on their fundamental understanding of *hsing* in its ontological perspective as on their respective emphasis on the practical methods of reaching the state of perfect realization of *hsing* in its true sense. The historical antithesis of Mencius and Hsün Tzu finds its metaphysical synthesis far down in the Neo-Confucianism.

### 4. Tung Chung-shu

During the Medieval Period, in which Taoism and Buddhism flourished, discussions on *the Chung Yung* centering on the concept of sincerity are scant and shallow, though not null. Tung Chung-shu (179?-



104 B.C.?), appreciated the *Chung Yung* in his theorization of ethics, but he apprehended *ch'eng* as a mere faith (*hsin*<sup>s</sup>) and added its characteristic 'unswerving singleness (of mind)' without further elaboration.<sup>13)</sup>

### 5. Han Yü and Li Ao

In the revival of Confucianism at the end of Medieval Period, a famous stylist Han Yü (768~824) advocated the supremacy of Mencius, and thereby noticed the mystical tendency apparent in Mencius philosophy in which such discussions on mind and human nature abound.

All things are complete within us. There is no greater delight than to find sincerity when one examines oneself.<sup>14)</sup>

Above phrases and his method of self-cultivation through 'nourishing the mind' and 'making fewer desires'<sup>15)</sup> provided Han Yü with suitable answers to the Buddhist problem in his own day. Li Ao (fl. 798) also was profoundly influenced by the idea of *Ch'eng* in the *Chung Yung* and used it to describe the mental condition of the sage but did not seem to be particularly impressed by the doctrine of earnest practice in the same book.<sup>16)</sup> But still his emphasis on the vacuity (*hsü*<sup>t</sup>) of mind as an intermediate step to enlightenment (*ming*<sup>u</sup>) from sincerity anticipates the full-bloomed doctrine of *ch'eng* in Chou Tun-yi (1017~1033), the father of Neo-Confucianism. Both Han Yü and Li Ao, though their originality is doubtful, had contributed much to restore

13) Fung, Yu-lan. *History of Chinese Philosophy*. vol. II. Tr. Derk Bodde. p. 40.

14) *Mencius*, 7A:4.

15) *Ibid.*, 7B:35.

16) *Sourcebook*, p. 459. cf. *Mencius*, 2A:2.

the original, classical teachings of Confucianism and thus prepared for the blooming of Neo-Confucianism.

## 6. Chou Tun-Yi

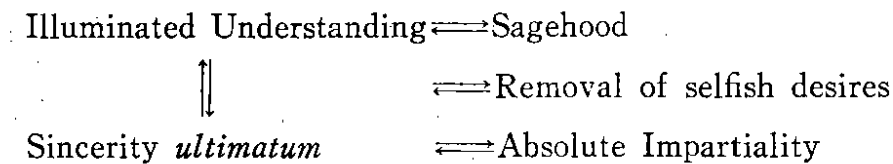
Beginning with Master Chou, Confucianism was reborn, after its long subordination to Buddhism and Taoism. In *the T'ai-chi T'u-shuo*, it is surprising that without mentioning *the Analects* or any commentary on those classics, he can present a systematic exposition of metaphysical theory in such a small manual. What is more remarkable is that this morality is expounded with the profound consideration of a metaphysical foundation. For the first time in the history of Confucian schools a real encounter as well as a harmonious cooperation of morality and metaphysics is to be found. The Confucian scholars are by then equipped with proper philosophical theorization. He describes sincerity as the foundation of moral nature and the source of all activities, and *ch'eng* possesses so heightened a position in his system that it has been considered the foundation of his teaching. A significant contribution which he made to the theory of sincerity is his idea that *ch'eng* is the state of mind in which one can detect the undifferentiated feeling of good and evil but at the same time make the choice between good and evil. This idea of *chi*<sup>17</sup> marks the departure from the Taoistic influence found in Li Ao and true return to Confucianism on a dialectically-higher level.

Here the ingenuity of Neo-Confucian metaphysics in synthesizing two contradictory elements of human nature is revealed. Sincerity in its reality is tranquil but its function is dynamic.<sup>17)</sup> Besides the subtle,

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17) *Sourcebook*, p. 461.

incipient, activating power of *chi*, Master Chou provides his posterior Neo-Confucianists a complete list of the qualities pertaining to a sage, whose foundation is sincerity. The proper method for reaching the state of a sage is by way of concentration-on-one (*ching yi*<sup>w</sup>) which leads to the idea of *ching* (seriousness<sup>x</sup>) in Cheng brothers<sup>18)</sup> with the additional qualities like absolute impartiality (*chih kung*<sup>y</sup>) through removal of selfish desires (*ssu yu*<sup>z</sup>) which finally results in perfect understanding (*ming* <sup>aa</sup>) Direct and dynamic identification of sincerity and understanding or enlightenment in Ch. 21. of *the Chung Yung* is now elaborated by introducing intermediate steps. The following formula is obtained:



(Diagram 2)

Though he did not explicitly mention the relationship between *T'ai-chi*, and *ch'eng*, Chu Hsi correctly says that both are one and the same.<sup>19)</sup>

## 7. Shao Yung

Shao Yung (1011-1077), except in his numerological metaphysics, also concurs with Chou Tun-yi in the method of becoming sage in saying, "... If one follows the straightforward Way (*chih* <sup>ab</sup>) giving free play to sincerity, one will then come to comprehend all things..."<sup>21)</sup> Putting more emphasis on straightforwardness he may be said to be closer

18) 朱子語類, *chüan* 93:8B 濂溪精一, 明道敬

19) *Sourcebook*, p. 461.

20) Fung, *History*, Vol. 2 p. 468.

to the original idea of Confucius.<sup>21)</sup>

### 8. Chang Tsai

Chang Tsai's (1020~1077) *Western Inscription* stands for the culmination of the Neo-Confucian theory of morality, as *the Diagram of the Great Ultimate* of Chou Tun-yi does in the Neo-Confucian onto-cosmology. Both might be said to be two great poles around which the whole system of Neo-Confucianism revolves. By further exploiting the idea found in *the Book of Changes*, Chang Tsai articulated his personal commitment that he is concerned with myriad things not by conquering nature but by mastering himself. For him, to be a man is to become what a man ought to be through the infinite process of self-cultivation motivated by the unceasing power of *jen*, humanity.<sup>22)</sup> In addition to his creative contribution to the Neo-Confucian theory of mind by saying, for the first time, that "The mind commands man's nature and feelings,"<sup>ac</sup> Chapter 6 of *Cheng-meng* gives a penetrating insight into the dynamic identity of sincerity and enlightenment by separating *hsing* into Heavenly endowed nature<sup>ad</sup> and physical nature<sup>ae</sup> but at the same time providing the way of transforming the physical nature into a Heavenly one.<sup>af</sup>

Knowledge gained through enlightenment which is the result of sincerity is the innate knowledge of one's natural character. It is not the small knowledge of what is heard or what is seen.<sup>23)</sup>

By "sincerity resulting from enlightenment" is meant to develop one's nature fully through the investigations of things to the utmost, and by "enl-

21) See, *Analects*, 6:17 人之生也直.

22) *Sourcebook*, p. 500.

23) *Ibid.*, 507.

ightenment resulting from sincerity" is meant to investigate things to the utmost through fully developing one's nature.<sup>24)</sup>

Nature in man is always good. It depends on whether man can skillfully return to it.<sup>25)</sup>

Subsequent development and synthesis of Cheng-Chu Neo-Confucianism are prepared by Chang Tsai by his relentless intellectual pursuit and serious attitude in studying as appreciated by Chu Hsi. In sum, it is to be noted that, in the metaphysical writings of both Chou Tun-yi and Chang Tsai, to preserve and experience the quality of *ch'eng* in a man is the most important step toward achieving an enlightenment of the ultimate and total whether it is *t'ai-chi* or *t'ai ho*<sup>26)</sup> (great harmony).

## 9. Cheng brothers

The task remaining for Cheng brothers is to give real prominence to *li*,<sup>27)</sup> for *ch'i* was so completely treated by Chang Tsai that there is no room for further study. Cheng Hao (1032~1085), the 'soft-minded' elder brother, realized by himself the concept of *t'ien li*<sup>28)</sup> (Principle of Nature or Heaven) and as he understood by *ch'eng* 'the reason why any thing can be self-formed' he substituted Chou Tun-yi's doctrine of tranquility for his theory of seriousness (*ching*<sup>29)</sup>). Everywhere he observed sincerity: "In the dance and in archery, one's sincerity can be seen. ... In sprinkling, sweeping and answering questions, one can

24) *Ibid.*, 508.

25) *Ibid.*, 511.

26) cf. Cheng Chung-ying, "On Reality and Understanding in Confucian and Neo-Confucian Philosophy of Religion." Paper read at the Asian Studies Meeting, 1971, p. 25.

reach the level of the activities of sage.”<sup>27)</sup> Together with his conviction that “Principle is the mind”<sup>28)</sup> it is concluded:

$$t'ien-li=ch'eng=li \text{ (in everything)}=hsin^{ab}$$

To preserve the proper ontological status of *ch'eng*, he formulated his theory of cultivation in terms of seriousness rather than sincerity. This would explain the subsequent dropping of sincerity from the philosophical treatises since the time of the Cheng brothers. Cheng Yi (1033~1107), the ‘tough-minded’ younger brother, accelerated this tendency by finally establishing the doctrine that *li* is one but its manifestations are many<sup>at</sup> and thus substituted the constitutional function of *ch'eng* as the all-pervasive cosmo-ontological principle for *li*. Moreover, the frequent usage of *ch'eng* alongside with *ching*, i.e., *ch'eng-ching*<sup>am</sup> in the section on “Preserving one’s mind and nourishing one’s nature” indicates the fact that *ch'eng* is primarily understood by the Cheng brothers as an ethical principle rather than an ontological one. I quote a few examples:

Only with *ch'eng* and *ching* can one remain peaceful.<sup>29)</sup> If one guards against depravity, *ch'eng* will be preserved. ... (Quotations from Mengtzu and Confucius)... *Ching* will naturally grow in him....<sup>30)</sup>

And except *ching* there is no better way to enter the Way:

By holding fast to *ching*, one’s mind will be clear and can see principle perfectly well. Right and wrong will then not be confused. In this way knowledge can be extended.<sup>31)</sup>

27) *Reflections on things at Hand*. tr. by W.T. Chan. p.264.

28) *Sourcebook*, p.522. Principle and the mind are one.

29) *Chin Ssu Lu*, tr. W.T. Chan., p.124.

30) *Ibid.*, p.141.

31) *Ibid.*, p.132-34.

In the way of learning, the first thing is to be clear in one's mind and to know where to go and to act vigorously in order that one may arrive at sagehood. This is what is meant by sincerity resulting from enlightenment.<sup>32)</sup>

The *Chung Yung* formula (Ch. 21) is now enriched by further elaboration through inserting the step of clearing one's mind which finally results in extension of knowledge with regard to the principle of everything. Here a most balanced dictum for self-cultivation seems to be obtained; "Self-cultivation requires seriousness, the pursuit of learning depends on the extension of knowledge."<sup>33)</sup> Together with the frequent quotation from the *Book of Changes*— 'straighten the internal with seriousness, square the external with righteousness'— the above dictum which is concerned with both internal attitude of seriousness and the external pursuit of learning represents the basic formula of Cheng's method of self-cultivation.

Wing-tsit Chan comments that "the new doctrine *Ching* in Neo-Confucianism is one of the direct products of Zen."<sup>34)</sup> Although it is undeniable that the influence of Buddhism is deep for the formation of Neo-Confucianism, the basic tenets of Confucianism found in the *Chung Yung* do not have to borrow the idea of *ching* from Zen. Chu Hsi adds to Cheng-I's dictum that "The way to make oneself sincere<sup>a</sup>" lies in having a firm faith in the Way..."<sup>35)</sup> Chang Po-hsing's footnote makes it clearer why the extensive study in principle enables one to become a sage:

To study is to seek humanity (*jen*). But *jen* is not something outside for

32) *Ibid.*, p. 37.

33) *Sourcebook.*, p. 562. 18:5b.

34) *Sourcebook.*, p. 429.

35) 近思錄 37. 朱子語類 30:14b.

us to seek earnestly. It is in our minds and also in the midst of everyday affairs. At all times and with all things, we should investigate its principle by studying extensively, wholeheartedly devote ourselves to its application by concentrating on *ch'eng* and *ching*, sift its truth by inquiring earnestly, and seek out its essential meaning by reflecting on what is at hand... Humanity will be found in doing this... *Jen* is the principle that penetrates both the higher and the lower levels...<sup>36)</sup>

But what is that which penetrates the higher and the lower levels? The onto-cosmological principle or the reality is *ch'eng*. Cheng-I says:

...No matter how many important things there may be, they can be covered by the saying. "Such is the impossibility of hiding the real" (The *Chung Yung*, Ch. 16) What penetrates the higher and the lower level are nothing but this *ch'eng*<sup>37)</sup>

Yeh Ts'ai's comment and Chu Hsi's instruction to his disciples are in agreement that *ch'eng* itself is the concrete principle.<sup>38)</sup>

## 10. Chu Hsi

In Chu Hsi's systematic philosophy, six major concepts of Confucianism are said to be developed, systematized and synthesized: namely, the Great Ultimate, *li*, *ch'i*, *hsing*, the investigation of things, and *jen*.<sup>39)</sup> But where is sincerity? Is it completely dropped out of the list of Confucianism synthesized by Chu Hsi? He gives a puzzling statement concerning sincerity: that there is no need to say anything further on the term 'sincerity'. How could this statement be construed? By quo-

36) 近思錄 60.

37) *Ibid.*, 18.

38) *Ibid.*, 18.

39) *Sourcebook.*, p. 589-91.



ting his full explanation, I think, the proper locus of that ontological principle of reality or *ch'eng* can be clarified:

In substance the doctrine of *jen* and *yi*<sup>40</sup> is this: Heaven, in the creation of all things, endowed each with its own nature. But the nature is not a material thing; it is a *li* inherent in me. Therefore that which gives to the *hsing* a substantive existence consists of *jen*, *yi*, *li*<sup>41</sup>, *chih*<sup>42</sup> and *ch'eng*... of these five, that which we term sincerity (*ch'eng*) is the principle of reality; as in the case of *jen*, *yi*, *li*, and *chih*, they are all real, with nothing false in them. Therefore there is no need to say...<sup>40)</sup>

Chu Hsi gives an interesting analogy to elaborate the concept of *ch'eng* as follows:

How is it that to the four virtues of the *hsing*, another sincerity is added, the whole number being termed the Five Nature-Principles (five constant virtues)? Answer: Sincerity gives reality to the four, so that *jen* has a real existence, and *yi* has a real existence,... It is like Earth, one of the five agents; if there were no earth, there would be nothing to contain the other four. Again, it is like the sphere of earth in the four seasons;... Spring corresponds to *jen*, and is characterized by the Vital Impulse.<sup>43</sup> In the Summer we see its persistent and permeating principle;... In all four seasons... the Vital Impulse is there. The fact is, there is but one Principle in the universe, but it has various names in accordance with its different manifestations. Each of the four virtues corresponds to one of the five agents; but sincerity is the one which corresponds to Earth, the one by which we know that the four virtues... have a real existence and are not mere figments of the imagination.... Sincerity is reality, and really means that a thing *Is*...<sup>41)</sup>

From the above Chu Hsi's intention to keep the concept of *ch'eng* as the ontological principle of reality becomes evident. He ascribes

40) Bruce, J. Percy. *The Philosophy of Human Nature*. Translation of Chu Hsi's Complete Works. Book 42-48. (London, 1922), p. 416.

41) Bruce., *op. cit.*, *ibid.*

such an interpretation to his teacher Cheng-I:

*Ch'eng* is reality and also guilelessness. From the Han dynasty downwards it was regarded solely as guilelessness. When Cheng Tzu appeared he interpreted it as reality, and the scholars who succeeded him dropped the meaning of guilelessness, forgetting that in the *Chung Yung* both meanings occur; we must not regard *ch'eng* as meaning only reality, and guilelessness as something different from *ch'eng*.<sup>42)</sup>

Although Chu Hsi strikes the balance in reading both the cosmo-ontological and ethical meaning of *ch'eng* by referring to the *Chung Yung*, he is in a subtle manner introducing his own metaphysical principle of *li* to take the place of *ch'eng* in its function. Thus, he changes technically *ch'eng* into *t'ien-li*:

What is meant by saying that Nature is *ch'eng*? Answer: The Nature is substantive, *ch'eng* is abstract. The word Nature is the name of a principle, the word *ch'eng* is the name of a quality.<sup>43)</sup>

After Chu Hsi interpretes *ch'eng* as the original substance of *t'ien-li*<sup>as</sup> or the reality of *t'ao-li*, or the principle of the real existence<sup>at</sup> what remains for him to explain is the relationship between similar concepts like *ching* or seriousness, *chung-shu*, *hsin* and *jen*. The consistency of his explanation of these terms can be explained by the fact that *ch'eng* is always remaining as a substance<sup>au</sup> and all the other terms are its

42) Bruce., *Ibid.* In fact, Cheng I is not the only person to see *ch'eng* as reality. Before him, Chang Ts'ai said: Sincerity implies reality.... Insincerity implies absence of reality..." *Sourcebook*, p.503. Cheng Hao also shows similar understanding: "Wisdom, humanity, and courage... the way by which they are practiced is one. As it is one, there is sincerity. It merely means to make three virtues real..." *Sourcebook*., p.532.

43) Bruce., p.419.

manifestations or operations.<sup>av, 44)</sup> Thus, in his theory of sincerity is found a great synthesis of the *Chung Yung*, the *Book of Changes*, Confucius, Mencius, Chou Tun-yi, Chang Ts'ai, and the Cheng brothers. In his *Letter to the Gentlemen of Hunan on Equilibrium and Harmony*,<sup>45)</sup> he confessed that his previous theory lacked a great foundation because he was completely misguided by Cheng I's theory of *chung-ho*<sup>aw</sup> although Cheng-I had already corrected his error—and provided a new approach to moral cultivation. But he he did not discuss up to the point where the great foundation lies. From the context, we can read that the foundation is equilibrium (*chung*)<sup>ax</sup> and this *chung* is reached only by *ching*.<sup>46)</sup> When we closely examine his remark on the relationship of *chung* to *ch'eng*, the great foundation turns out to be sincerity itself.

Question: *Chung* and *ch'eng*, what are their meanings? Answer: *Chung* is an aspect of *t'ao-li*; *ch'eng* is a substance of it. *ch'eng* is directly identified with *hsing*.<sup>47)</sup>

In fact, a comprehensive doctrine of sincerity is achieved in Chu Hsi's creative synthesis. It was also Chu Hsi who provided a consistent interpretation of the *Chung Yung* by incorporating it with the idea of the *I-Ching*:

To embody faithfulness means not to have an iota of insincerity, and to arrive at harmony means to have the feeling aroused and to attain due measure and degree so that everything is in its right place. Quickness of apprehension, intelligence, and insight and wisdom all come from it. This is what

44) *Redorded Savings of Chu Hsi.*, Chüans 62.63, and 64.

45) *Sourcebook.*, 600-602.

46) *Ibid.*

47) 朱子語類, 62:5a.

is meant by "Given sincerity there will be enlightenment"<sup>48)</sup>

He also harmonizes Mencius and Chou Tun-yi's ideas with the the idea of *jen-t'ao* of *ch'eng-chih* in the *Chung Yung*.<sup>49)</sup> He further explains that the enlightenment resulting from sincerity is nothing but *hsing-chih*, that is, deepening and developing one's own Heaven-endowed nature. Sincerity resulting from enlightenment is said to be achieved by enriching oneself with knowledge or extensive learning, *ay*.<sup>50)</sup>

### 11. Wang Yang-ming

So far we have surveyed Chu Hsi's theory of sincerity. But we cannot help but feel that his synthesis of all elements of different origins seems to lack depth of profundity. It was Wang Yang-ming (1472~1529)<sup>51)</sup> who supplemented Chu Hsi's horizontal broadness with a vertical depth by exhaustively studying the *Ta Hsueh*. According to Wang Yang-ming,

48) 近思錄, p. 139 and also 朱子語類 44:27b.

49) Original texts are follows: 朱子語類. 64:5a. 誠是天理之實 然更無纖. 毫作爲, 聖人之生其稟受渾然氣質, 清明純粹. 全是此理, 更不待修爲而, 自然與天爲一. ...〔周子〕〔孟子〕言, 萬物皆備於我, 便是誠, 反身而誠, 便是誠之. ...

50) *Ibid.* 64:19a 誠者物之終始...以理而言: 不誠無物...以人而言. 自成...物成實理以言; 君子誠之爲貴, 實心而言.

64: 7b 「自誠明謂之性」此性字便是性之也. 「自明誠謂之教」此教字是學之也. 此二字都是轉一轉說, 與首章「天命之謂性」「修道之謂教」二字義不同.

64: 8a 自誠明性之也. 自明誠充之也. 轉一轉說「天命之謂性」以舉體統說. 以誠而論明則, 誠明合而爲一. 以明而論誠則, 誠明分而爲二.

51) It is quite vague how Wang's philosophy could be supported by historical actuality of a continuous tradition of cultural heritage, though it seems clear that his philosophizing was very much influenced by Lu Hsiang-shan (1139~1193), a contemporary of Chu Hsi. There is no in-depth study on the continuity of intellectual tradition from Chu Hsi on to Wang Yang-ming.

sincerity is understood as carrying out one's knowledge in action. This is, as a matter of fact, in accord with his theory of the unity of knowledge with action.<sup>52</sup> In order to find a proper locus of *ch'eng* in Wang's philosophy, it seems best to read the following:

Principle is one and no more. In terms of its condensation and concentration in the individual it is called *hsing*. In terms of the master of this accumulation... mind (*hsin*,). In terms of its emanation and operation it is called the will. In terms of the clear consciousness of the emanation and operations, it is called knowledge. And in terms of the stimulus and responses of this clear consciousness, it is called things. Therefore, when it pertains to things, it is called investigation, when it pertains to knowledge, it is called extension, when it pertains to the will, it is called sincerity, and when it pertains to mind, it is called rectification.<sup>53)</sup>

Wang's conception of *ch'eng* is derived from his conviction that the first of the eight items in the *Great Learning* should be to 'make one's will sincere', in opposition to the Cheng-Chu school which insists that investigation of things and extension of knowledge should be the initial items, because:

there are neither principles nor things outside the mind. The teaching in the *Chung Yung* that 'Without sincerity there would be nothing', and the effort to manifest one's clear character described in the *Great Learning* mean nothing more than the effort to make the will sincere. And the work of making the will sincere is none other than the investigations of things.<sup>53)</sup>

In short, what Wang Yang-ming holds as sincerity pertains to the

52) Wang Yang-ming. *Instructions for Practical Living*. Translation by Wing-tsit Chan. New York, Columbia University Press., 1963, p.161.

53) Wang Yang-ming. *op. cit.* p.14-5. For the reason why Wang does not favor the idea of reality as *ch'eng*, see Jung Hwa-yul. "Wang Yang-ming and the existential Phenomenology" *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 5 (1955), 612-636.

way of man, i.e., *ch'eng-chih*, and not the *ch'eng* itself as the way of Heaven. Consequently, he strengthened the human-effort aspect of *ching* or seriousness. The balanced attitude of the Cheng-Chu school toward self-cultivation by "abiding in the seriousness as well as exhaustive study in principle" <sup>54</sup> became once more unbalanced. It was T'ai Chen in the Ch'ing critical Confucian trend who again tried to restore the balance.<sup>54)</sup> Whether one puts emphasis on *ch'eng* or *ching* according to one's own way of interpretation, what should be remembered is that whenever *ching* is taken into discussion, there lurks the real *ch'eng* which actually makes it possible to talk about *ching* and act in accordance with *ching*. Is it not the reason why Chu Hsi said that there is no need of mentioning *ch'eng*?

### III. The Chung-yung philosophy of Commitment: Philosophical Reconstruction

...it is not...useless, much less ridiculous, to trace in metaphysics the first principles of ethics; for it is only as a philosopher that anyone can reach the first principles of this conception of duty, otherwise we could not look for either certainty or purity in the ethical teaching....But...no moral principle is based on any *feeling*, but such a principle is really nothing else than an obscurely conceived *metaphysic* which inheres in every man's reasoning faculty;... -from Kant's Preface to *the Metaphysical Elements of Ethics*.

When the *Chung-yung* talks about the way of Heaven, it is natural and devoid of processes, whereas in talking about the way of man, it abounds with detailed processes in learning.<sup>55)</sup>

54) Cheng Chung-ying. *Tai Chen's Inquiry into Goodness*, p.44. and *passim*.

55) 中庸言天道處皆自然無節次。言人道處皆有下工夫節次。朱子語類 64:5b.

# 1. The Way of Man: Comparison between the approaches in the *Chung-yung* and in the *Ta-hsüeh*

Now it is the way of man that I am going to discuss regarding sincerity and enlightenment to which a proper philosophical reconstruction can devote itself, for philosophy is throughly a human concern. It was already mentioned that what has to be philosophically elaborated in *the Chung-yung* by later philosophers is the terse formula in Ch. 21.<sup>56)</sup> In fact, the problem of sincerity is proposed in the latter half of Ch. 20, which starts with the question of Duke Ai regarding government. At the end of the discussion of 'the nine standards by which to administer the empire, its states and the families,' it follows that 'but the way by which they are followed is one.' This 'one' is 'sincerity.'<sup>57)</sup> Then follows "In all matters if there is preparation they will succeed. ...There is a way to be sincere with oneself: If one does not understand what is good, he will not be sincere with himself.' This is the beginning of the whole discussion of sincerity and enlightenment. If we compare the method of inference, from branch to root in *the Chung-yung* with the eight steps in *the Ta-hsueh*, it is obvious that the *ch'eng* in the former is different from that 'to make the will sincere' in the latter.

*Chung-yung* ch. 20.

*Ta-hsueh*; the text.

C1) a way to govern the people

T1) to manifest their clear character to the world

56) cf. *supra.*, Diagram 1.

57) Prof. Hsü comments that this 'one' is *jen*. By *ch'eng* he understands total manifestation of *jen*. I follow Chu Hsi.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| C2) a way to have the confidence<br>of the superiors | T2) to bring order to their states  |
| C3) a way to be trusted by his<br>friends            |   |
| C4) a way to obey one's parents                      | T3) to regulate their families  |
| C5) a way to examine himself                         |   |
| C6) a way to be <i>sincere</i> with one-<br>self     | { T4) to cultivate their personal lives<br>{ T5) to rectify their minds<br>{ T6) to make their wills <i>sincere</i> |
| C7) ...understand what is good                       | { T7) to extend their knowledge<br>{ T8) ...investigation of things   |

If we wish to give an equal importance to both the *Chung-yung* and the *Ta-hsueh*, it might be reasonable to suppose that *ch'eng* in C6 should comprise T4, T5 and T6; and C7 is to be achieved by T7 and T8. Hence, the scope of *ch'eng* in C. and T. is different.

There are two ways of talking *ch'eng*: in terms of *t'ien-tao*, *ch'eng* is a concept denoting metaphysical/ontological/cosmological *substantia* or a cosmic vital force which Chou Tun-yi expressed in his *T'ung-shu* (ch. 1); "Great is the *ch'ien*<sup>bb</sup>, the originator! All things obtain their beginning from it. It is the source of sincerity." In terms of *jen-tao*, *ch'eng* is to be called *hsing*. Chou Tun-yi says: "The way of *ch'ien* is to change and transform so that everything will obtain its correct nature (*hsing*) and destiny (*ming*).<sup>bc</sup> But if it is recalled that "*ch'eng* is the foundation of sage" and the first chapter of *the Chungyung*; *hsing* is endowed by Heaven, and to follow the *hsing* is the Way, and combining with this the conviction of Confucius that it is possible to follow the Way because the Way is not far from man and thus can be enlarged by man alone, then it becomes clear the very possibility in man or inherent potentiality of man comes from the cosmic productive power of *ch'eng*. All the descriptions about *ch'eng* in terms of *t'ien-tao*



like 'absolute' 'pure', 'sheer good' 'absence of falsehood' or 'without having sound and smell' could be without exception, turned to describe *sheng*<sup>bd</sup> (life). Because *sheng* comprises both the unceasing cosmic operation as well as each individual human life in his strenuous efforts and struggle to live, *ch'eng* could be said to penetrate both *t'ien-tao* and *jen-tao* through the mediation of *sheng*. It should be remarked, however, the fundamental position of *the Chung-yung* in its basic Confucian spirit is humanistic. Thus the whole discussion is involved with *jen-tao*, the way of man.

## 2. Mencius' three joys and three fundamental tendencies of life

Let me start with C6 and C7, as they represent the roots. To elaborate these, it is helpful to look into the similar passage in Mencius: All things are already complete in oneself. There is no greater joy than to examine oneself and be sincere. In C4 and C5, 'to examine oneself is understood as a way to obey one's parents'. Then what might be the possible relationship between the joy resulting from self-examination and the obedience to parents resulting from self-examination?

It has already been mentioned that *ch'eng* is the motivating force of life as well as the principle of life-realization. All manifestations of life are possible due to *ch'eng* which pervades through both transcendent Heaven and this world populated by men. Now three fundamental tendencies of life could be introduced; one is extension, the second is expansion, the third is elevation or sublimation. Life wants itself to be extended. This tendency of extension is achieved by family life through

marriage. The tendency of expansion is achieved by social life through politics and community-participation. The elevating or sublimating tendency is satisfied by morals, arts and religions. Now what were the joys in Mencius? According to Mencius, there are three joys; one is to see that parents are living and brothers having no trouble; secondly, in relation to Heaven or one's fellow man, there should be no cause for fear or shame; thirdly, there is joy in acquiring talented students and educating them. Three joys of Mencius roughly correspond to the three tendencies of life. For Mencius, joy is nothing but to witness the three tendencies of life being realized in the world. But the joy resulting from self-examination has a deeper meaning than those three joys, for from self-examination he could find the sincerity, the motivating force to realize the basic tendencies of life. All things complete in oneself means that all the possibilities of life are fulfilled or manifested. From the above reasoning, it is to be concluded that self-examination through *ch'eng* ensures obedience to parents and thus one of human basic joys.

### 3. *Ch'eng* and *Hsing*: Absolute reality and human nature

Then, we come to the fundamental characterization of *ch'eng*. The distinction between the Way of Heaven and that of man is followed by the characterization of both; "He who *is* sincere is one who hits upon what is right without effort and apprehends without thinking. He who *tries to be* sincere is one who chooses good and holds fast to it." The Way of Heaven is directly identified with the *ch'eng* itself without efforts and without thinking. But the way of man is to be achieved only by attempting to be sincere. Mencius is right to change *ch'eng-chih*<sup>60</sup> to the clearer form of *ssu-ch'eng*<sup>61</sup> Chu Hsi is still

more ingenuous in interpreting *hsing*, the result of *ming* from *ch'eng*, as *hsing-chih*<sup>bg</sup> and *chiao*, the result of *ch'eng* from *ming*, as *hsüeh-chih*<sup>bh</sup>. Combining both interpretations, we obtain the following equation:

The Way of Heaven: *ch'eng* = *hsing-chih* = *hsing*

The way of man: *ch'eng-chih* = *ssu-ch'eng* = *hsueh-chih* = *chiao*

To understand the idea of *hsing-chih* of Chu Hsi, it is necessary to say something about the difference between *ch'eng* and *hsing*. To understand the idea of *ssu-ch'eng* in terms of *hsüeh-chih*, we should elaborate the detailed processes of self-reflection of which the basis is 'watchfulness when alone.'

For brevity sake, we can point out three differences between *ch'eng* and *hsing*: First, *ch'eng* has primarily ontological meaning (like substance or prime mover in Aristotle), whereas *hsing* always implies the human embodiment of that ontological concept. As there are many aspects of human ability which are discernable, likewise *hsing* has evolved into *hsing/hsin/ching*<sup>bi</sup> (nature/mind/emotion) respectively. Secondly, whether the *hsing* is inborn (Heavenly) or physical/habitual nature, it has a more or less static/ready-made connotation; whereas *ch'eng* is always dynamic as it is basically inseparable from the activity of mind whose master is man himself trying to follow and assist the ever-producing cosmic operation. Thirdly, it is to be added that *ch'eng* is in an eternal process of creation which cannot be stopped in its own process. This continuous creation is the nature of *ch'eng* itself. But *hsing*, as it comes from Heaven and is endowed by *ch'eng* with the human portion of that eternal Nature, is always yearning for the return to its original nature. In human efforts this returning is represented by

reflection.

This reflection means nothing but the tendency to learn and immitate *ch'eng*: to make oneself sincere is strictly human way in order to attain, in the final resort, the unity of Heaven and man. How is this unity possible? For *ch'eng* itself, in other words, for the Heaven itself, there is no need of efforts, for no separation of its essence *ch'eng* (true reality) and its attribute *ch'eng* (absence of falsehood) is possible. However, *ch'eng-chih* on the part of human beings, requires efforts and thinking how to be sincere. In reflecting about oneself, that is, in thinking how to be sincere, a problem arises. How could one self reflect or turn back upon his self? Does it mean there are two selves; one the reflecting self and the other the reflected self? Are the two selves the same or different? Logical inconceivability does not apply here, for it is a psychological fact that we frequently reflect about ourselves. Reflecting 'I' reflects upon the reflected 'me'. More intricate problem arises, when we deal with the criterion or the objective of the reflection. Why do we reflect about ourselves? It is because we perceive a sort of contradiction between the two heterogeneous elements within oneself or members of the society. If a certain contradiction arises, there exist certainly one who violates the criterion, whereby ordinary activities are regulated, and the other who wishes to restore the criterion. Within one self, the former is the reflected and the latter is the reflector. Thus, in the light of the above interpretation, reflection is to be understood as a continual pursuit of harmonization between the two contradicting elements existing within oneself. Reflection is a warning against the violating tendency of the supposedly reflected self, and at the same time fervent desire to accomplish the improvement or better-

ment of the present stage of conflicting criteria by restoring the original harmony. The point of reflection lies not so much in warning or restoring as in attaining betterment and harmonization. Thus a philosophical significance of reflection is to be found in its ceaseless efforts to attain the unity of ideal self and actual self, if the reflector and the reflected self are to be understood as the ideal and the actual respectively.

#### 4. Unity of the ideal and the actual self

How could then this unity of the ideal and the actual self be possible? How do we perceive the separation of self into two conflicting elements? Confucian answers to the above questions are supplied in its philosophy of sincerity. The Confucian theory of human nature answers the second question. And the theory of *ch'eng-ming* in Ch.21 of *the Chung-yung* answers the first. The underlying presupposition of separating the two elements of the self-same human nature is the Neo-Confucian metaphysics of *li-ch'i*. According to this theory, man also consists of two entities, *li* and *ch'i*. Whether the former evolved out of the latter, or, whether both have eternally coexisted as two essentially distinct entities, is a moot point to answer. For the present purpose it is, however, by no means necessary to determine which is a correct view, for the point regarding the philosophy of human nature is that both entities are viewed as quite distinct, though united, in man. Discarding the minute explanation concerning the evolution of human nature from the metaphysical principle, human nature is divided into two: physical nature and Heavenly or original nature. Needless to say, even among the Sung Confucianists there is no agreement on the classification of

the two.

What Mencius describes as "It is due to our nature that our mouths desire sweet taste, that our eyes desire beautiful colors, that our ears desire pleassant sounds, that our nose desire fragrant odors, and that our four limbs desire ease and comfort..." would be included in the physical nature. (Mencius, 7B:24)... Kao Tzu's "what is inborn" and "by nature we desire food and sex," all refer to the physical nature. The four beginnings of Mencius also belong to the physical nature. The seven feelings of "pleasure, anger, sorrow, joy, love, hate, and desire" are the natural expressions of the physical nature. To the above, we can add the inborn hereditary nature, inborn disability included, and environmental influence on the physical nature. Even the habits formed and educated by social mores and instruction would be included in the physical nature. In short, physical nature may be defined as an individual self consisting of his activities and consciousness within the limited boundary of space and time. This is what we call an actual self.

What about the Heavenly nature? Best to adopt Chu Hsi.

Nature is principle *li* only. However, without the material *ch'i* and concrete stuff of the universe, principle would have nothing in which to inhere. When *ch'i* is received in its state of clearness, there will be no obscurity or obstruction and *li* will express itself freely. If there is obscurity or obstruction, then in its operation of *li*, the *li* of Heaven will dominate if the obstruction is small, and human selfish desire will dominate if the obstruction is great. From this we know that original nature is perfectly good. This is the nature described by Mencius as "good", by Master Chou as "pure and perfectly good" and "the nature traced to the source of our being."<sup>58)</sup>

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58) *Sourabook*, p.624.

This original nature consists of concrete principles, complete with humanity, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom. In Chu Hsi the Neo-Confucian doctrine of nature becomes quite clear. Before we continue our discussion about Heavenly nature, we must clarify the relationship between nature, the Way, feelings, and the physical nature, for the apparent distinction between the physical and the Heavenly nature implies the possibility of transforming the physical into the inborn potentiality.

Nature refers to what is endowed in man and things. The Way refers to that which is inherent in all existences. In other words, the Way is called so in terms of the general or objective point of view; whereas nature is called so from the particular and subjective point of view. The distinction between feelings and nature is likewise simple, for nature merely indicates the substance, the form, the state before the activity takes place, whereas the feelings are the functions, the phenomena, the state after the activities start. Now the important point of the relationship is this: though the *li* is one, manifestations are many. Through this doctrine, the apparent conflict or bifurcation of the physical and the Heavenly nature is eliminated, and hence it is possible to achieve the unity of Heaven and man.

The Heavenly nature embodied in man presides over the physical nature, only if the former dominates and the impurities and obstructions of the latter are null. But the existence of the Heavenly nature in each individual self is undeniable, because of two facts: one is that the Way is impartial and pervasive in distributing its *ch'eng* to either man or things. Secondly, what is better for the condition of man, it is the best qualities that Heaven endows man with. Thus the Heavenly nature

within man functions as "the proper reason why a man becomes a real man and at the same time as the obligatory law whereby a man ought to live."<sup>bj</sup> A man is, within himself, possessed of an ideal self which I interpreted before as the reflecting self who always checks and balances the reflected self.

In the light of the above discussion, man is said to be a contradictory being though unified at all times, because the limited portion of man always wishes to become unlimited. The eternal conflict between actual, limited self and the ideal, unlimited self would be summarily expressed on a metaphysical level: "*li* is unlimited or pervasive and *ch'i* is limited or partial"<sup>bk. 59)</sup>

The very reason of the apparent separation between the actual/ideal, the limited/unlimited, or the Heavenly/physical nature of man is derived from the essential metaphysical structure of man composed of *li* and *ch'i*. But the important point of a man, that he is really a man, i.e., *ratio essendi* as well as *ratio cognoscendi* of a man, lies in the fact that man always reflects himself and tries to perfect himself. That's why a man is neither Heaven nor a mere thing. To employ the metaphysical theory of *t'ai-chi* of Chou Tun-yi, the Great Ultimate is the *li* in which there is no separation between *li* and *ch'i*, the whole all-round self-sufficient entity. And according to Chu Hsi the *li* of the mind also is the Great Ultimate. This means that the mind in its original state is neither tranquil nor activating. Once the mind starts to activate, the polarization of *li* and *ch'i* takes place. In terms of human nature, good and bad become manifested. The good/bad distinc-

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59) This is a slightly different version by a Korean Neo-Confucian scholar Yi I (1539~1584) to further explain Chu Hsi' final formulation of the relationship between *li* and *ch'i*: "*li* is one, and many are the manifestations."



tion are in an inert, subtle, incipient stage of *chi*. Then if we err and do not hold fast to good which is originally inherent in the Heaven-endowed nature, the gap between bad and good becomes wider. The wider the gap becomes, the stronger becomes the desire of the ideal self to return to its original nature. This movement of returning is what we call reflection. Mencius said:

Yao and Shun practiced humanity and righteousness because of their nature.

King T'ang and King Wu did so because of their personal cultivation.<sup>60)</sup>

With Yao and Shun it was their nature. With T'ang and Wu, it was their effort to return [to their nature].<sup>61)</sup>

The exact parallel of the above two passages would support my argument that reflection is nothing but returning to one's original nature. This is the very idea when Chu Hsi comments on the process of "sincerity resulting from enlightenment" as '*hsing-chih*'. Overcoming the apparent separation of *li* and *ch'i*, and their human embodiment *t'ien-hsin* and *jen-hsin*,<sup>61)</sup> the unity of Heaven and man becomes possible. To Yao and Shun the returning becomes natural. But to King T'ang and King Wu returning means effort. For ordinary man, returning is not as easy as Yao and Shun. In fact there is no need to talking about *ch'eng*, the perfect Way of Heaven. So the discussion turns to *hsuen-chih*, the way of man. This part was elaborated and clarified by the Neo-Confucian metaphysics of morality. How is the unity of Heaven and man possible, on the part of man? By returning with efforts. But how is this returning possible?

60) Mencius, 7A:30.

61) *Ibid.*, 7B:33.

## 5. Reflection as returning

The primary formula of returning is already found in *the Chung-yung*. In Chapter one, it is said:

...Therefore the superior man is cautious over what he does not see and apprehensive over what he does not hear.... Therefore the superior man is watchful over himself when he is alone.

How and why one must watch over himself when he is alone? Chu Hsi, incorporating Chou Tun-yi's idea of *chi* in which mind is able to discern the good from the bad in its incipient stage of the mind-activity, with that of *the Chung-yung* idea of *chung-ho*, explains;

...one who studies (*hsüeh-[chih]-zo<sup>bm</sup>*) when he is alone, should even more carefully examine the germinal direction of his thought (*nien<sup>bn</sup>*) and care about the incipient, subtle, activating force of *chi* giving rise to good and evil.<sup>62)</sup>

In *the Chung-yung* it is read:

Before the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are aroused it is called *chung* (equilibrium). When these feelings are aroused and each and all attain due measure and degree, it is called *ho* (harmony).

So the way of learning, i.e., the way of man consists in 'carefully examining *chi*' and not being disturbed by thought about the origin of right and wrong, but rather trying to attain due measure and degree. The possibility of this learning is already there in the mind, which originally is clear and pure and therefore is capable of penetrating all the principles to their utmost. In sum, the *hsüeh-chih* as the way of

62) 學者尤當處隨其念之方萌而致察焉以謹其善惡之幾也

man is always orienting us towards cultivation of our original Heavenly nature, which is nothing but *ch'eng*, the unceasing motivating power of life. *Ch'eng*, interpreted in terms of *li-ch'i* relationship, is the unifying power of the polarization of the unlimited *li* and the limited *ch'i*. The unlimited *li*, as embodied in man, is the original nature, *hsing*. The limited *ch'i* in an individual man is destiny (*ming*<sup>60</sup>) which, however, always anticipates correction by ceaseless efforts of *ch'eng-chih*. That which provides power with *ch'eng-chih* is also *ch'eng*, because *ch'eng* is the cosmic power pervading both Heaven and man. Thus, without *ch'eng* the reflection or returning from the actual to the ideal self is impossible. The failure to reflect or return is the result not of inability but of negligence. Therefore, for those who try to be sincere, the *Chung-yung* teaches the precise processes: (1) extensive study, (2) accurate inquiry, (3) careful thinking, (4) clear sifting, and (5) earnest practice. Chu Hsi aptly divides the first four and the last fifth and relates them to the previous passage, i.e., the choice of good and holding fast to it. Now the discussion turns to the study of good.

## 6. Good in the Confucian philosophy

What is good in the Confucian philosophy? The human nature is originally good according to Mencius. But the immediate retort from Hsün Tzu is that human nature is originally bad. Are they incompatible in insisting the nature of man is both good and bad at the same time? Without really sifting the contents of their comments about the human nature, we cannot simply answer yes. My contention is that they are compatible, because they are referring to different levels of human nature. It can be said that what Mencius called good nature is

human subjective nature, while what Hsun Tzu called bad is the objective aspects of human nature. Or it can be said that Mencius talks about the potential, whereas Hsun Tzu talks about the actual in human activities. Accordingly, the ways good is defined by the respective philosophers are merely indicating they have a different criterion to decide whether something is good or bad. According to Mencius, the subjectivist, good is "what is desirable." This simple statement presupposes the doctrine that human nature is originally good. But the good of the subjective criterion becomes really good, only if one does not transgress the Way of Heaven by following the dictates of his mind. Confucius could barely attain that stage at seventy. Then ordinary men need some objective criteria whereby to decide what is good and what is bad. That is why a study of good is required for those who try to be sincere. Hsün Tzu's "principle necessary for promise and obligation for handling affairs" indicates such objective criteria. Chu Hsi's method of investigation of things and extension of knowledge is nothing but the elaboration of that objective criteria of Hsun Tzu. But the Neo-Confucian solution of the apparent contradiction between Mencius and Hsun Tzu has its foundation already in *the Chung-yung*.

The most sincere in the world can fulfill one's nature. Having fulfilled one's nature, he is capable of doing all things. Further he is capable of participating in the creative and nourishing activities of the whole cosmos and forms a unity with Heaven and Earth.

Fulfilling one's nature naturally leads to fulfilling all the other things and finally forming one body with Heaven and Earth. Though the exact methods are not indicated, the basic spirit of this passage is that there is no distinction between subjective criteria and objective ones.

For Chu Hsi, the *li* in man and in things are one and the same principle. Otherwise it might not be possible for man to achieve the far-reaching and penetrating insight through investigating the *li* of everything. Wang Yang-ming, though he criticized Chu Hsi, also admits that *liang-chih*<sup>63</sup> is originally good, but that inborn knowledge of good should be completely accomplished in action. Thus in a deeper level the unity of knowledge and action is achieved by him. Strenuous efforts on the part of human beings have never been neglected from Confucius down to Wang. This is the very spirit of *ch'eng-chih* in the *Chung-yung*. Study is not enough. When recognized what is good, the knowledge should be practiced relentlessly.

If another man succeeds by one effort, you will use a hundred efforts. If another man succeeds by ten efforts, you will use a thousands efforts.<sup>63)</sup>

The reason why Yen Tzu alone among three thousand disciples was praised by Confucius is because of his efforts to learn the way of becoming a sage.

## 7. Summary

The preceding discussion may be summarized in one single sentence: the significance of life lies in achieving the realization of the ideal self through overcoming the actual self by way of reflecting or returning to the original self supported by the unceasing motor power of *ch'eng* which pervades both in Heaven and Earth. But is that realization of the ideal so easy and simple? Theory is easy, but practice is difficult. As soon as we realize the truth of this theory, we should practice with

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63) *Chung-yung*, Ch. 20.

unceasing efforts. But we do not have to worry about the exhaustion of the vital energy, because it is unceasing, ever-producing. Behind the Confucian efforts of *ch'eng-chih* there is a firm conviction of the deep, high, brilliant, infinite and lasting *ch'eng*.

When there is anything not yet practiced, or practiced but not yet earnestly, do not give up.<sup>64)</sup>

When Heaven is about to confer responsibility on any man, it will exercise his mind with suffering, subject his sinews and bones to hard work, expose his body to hunger, put him to poverty, place obstacles in the paths of his deeds, so as to stimulate his mind, harden his nature, and improve wherever he is incompetent.<sup>65)</sup>

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64) *Chung-yung* ch. 21.

65) *Mencius*, 6B:15

## Glossary

a 誠	aa 明	ba 居敬窮理
b 性	ab 直	bb 乾
c 仁	ac 心統性情	bc 命
d 理	ad 天地之性	bd 生
e 氣	ae 氣質之性	be 誠之
f 中庸	af 變化氣質	bf 思誠
g 天人合一	ag 太極，太虛	bg 性之
h 人道	ah 理	bh 學之
i 天道	ai 天理	bi 情
j 中孚	aj 敬	bj 所然之故 所當然之則
k 无妄	ak 心	bk 理通氣局
l 思無邪	al 理一分殊	bl 天心，人心
m 一貫之道	am 誠敬	bm 學之者
n 忠恕	an 誠之之道	bn 念
o 主忠信	ao 仁義	bo 命
p 天命	ap 禮	bp 良知
q 教	aq 知	
r 大學	ar 春意	
s 信	as 天理之本然	
t 虛	at 道理之實處，實有之理	
u 明	au 道體	
v 幾	av 用	
w 精一	aw 中和	
x 敬	ax 中	
y 至公	ay 充之，學之	
z 私欲	az 知行合一	